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Oifig an Stiúrthóra Seirbhísí Altranais & Cnáimhseachais

Office of the Nursing & Midwifery Services Director

# The Research Priorities for Nursing and Midwifery

# 2023 - 2028

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### **FOREWORD**

On behalf of the Health Service Executive (HSE) Office of Nursing and Midwifery Services Director (ONMSD), it is my pleasure to present this report on 'The Research Priorities for Nursing and Midwifery 2023-2028'. This report outlines the 20 priorities that have been identified by nurses and midwives working in the HSE and HSE funded agencies (Section 38) as their future research priorities for their practice and profession.

The knowledge and skills required to effectively deliver health services are complex and constantly evolving. As such, it is important for the nursing and midwifery professions to prioritise research that will help to advance their practice and improve patient outcomes. These research priorities will help to support our aims and commitments to progress the nursing and midwifery professions, in order to maximize high quality care delivery and healthcare outcomes. Collaboration with nurses and midwives across HSE and HSE funded agencies will be central to our approach.

The research priorities identified in this report are grounded in the strategic policy directions outlined in the: Sláintecare Implementation and Action Plan<sup>i</sup>, HSE Corporate<sup>ii</sup> and Service Plan<sup>iii</sup>, Department of Health Report of the Expert Review Body on Nursing and Midwifery (2022)<sup>iv</sup>, and ONMSD Strategic Plan 2023-2025<sup>v</sup>. The ONMSD is committed to raising the profile and optimising the contribution of nurses and midwives across all disciplines in response to these strategic policy directions.

I wish to thank nurses and midwives who participated in this scoping exercise and contributed to the development of these research priorities. Thank you also to our stakeholders in the Nominal Group who generously gave of their expertise and time, to the Directors of the NMPDUs who supported the scoping exercise and to the Working Group in the ONMSD.

These research priorities will provide a valuable roadmap for future research in the nursing and midwifery professions and will help to guide and inform efforts to improve care delivery and patient outcomes.

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**Dr Geraldine Shaw** Nursing and Midwifery Services Director, ONMSD / HSE Asst National Director Clinical Programme Implementation & Professional Development, Office of the Chief Clinical Officer

## INTRODUCTION

The Health Service Executive (HSE) Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services Director (ONMSD) works to strategically lead and support nurses and midwives to deliver safe, high-quality, personcentred care with the aim of helping people to improve their quality of life and wellbeing. Effective nursing and midwifery care and practice is guality-focused, evidence-based and uses skillful decision-making. Research that is designed to enhance knowledge and practice has an important influence on the quality, focus, and priorities of professional practice and health care. According to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland<sup>vi</sup>, persons using health services have a right to receive quality care by competent nurses and midwives who use "evidence-based knowledge and apply best practice standards in their work". Research utilisation is essential to embed best evidence into practice in order to produce good outcomes. The definition of research adopted by the HSE is "the attempt to derive generalizable or transferable new knowledge to answer or refine relevant questions with scientifically sound methods"vii. The purpose of research priority setting is to maximise the benefits of research investment, providing valuable direction for the allocation of public research funds into areas of strategic importanceviii.

The ONMSD commissioned this quality improvement scoping exercise to identify research priorities of nurses and midwives working in the HSE and HSE Funded Agencies (Section 38) for the period 2023-2028. The last national research priority setting exercise was undertaken by University College Dublin in 2007<sup>ix</sup>; therefore, it was time for another scoping exercise to be conducted.

#### The rationale for this scoping exercise was to:

- Maximise the potential of research to inform future practice and service delivery Direct research towards areas that have the most benefit to persons using our services • Provide worthwhile direction for the allocation of research support and funding, ensuring that
- limited resources are used effectively

### Aim and objectives

The overall aim of this scoping exercise was to identify research priorities for nursing and midwifery for the period 2023 - 2028, to support enhancement of service delivery and improve care experiences for persons using our services.

The objectives were:

- priorities in relation to the organisation and delivery of nursing and midwifery services
- To incorporate the input and perspectives of nurses and midwives in determining research • To determine areas in nursing and midwifery practice that require additional research To compile a list of research priorities for nursing and midwifery leaders to consider when deciding
- on the direction of future research

### Preparation for the scoping exercise

In advance of establishing a methodology, preparation focused on:

- Establishing a working group (see Appendix 1)
- Reviewing strategic policy documents to identify the strategic priorities Reviewing literature to determine the methodology for this research priority setting exercise Identifying stakeholder groups for surveys and nominal group Establishing a communication strategy and developing information documents for stakeholders

## **REVIEW OF INFLUENCING** LITERATURE

The following documents influenced the focus of the literature review for this survey: the HSE Corporate Plan (2021-24) with the vision for "a healthier Ireland, with the right care, at the right time, in the right place", and the HSE National Service Plan (2022) with its commitment to the "provision of high quality public healthcare".

In addition to these two documents national and international literature was reviewed to inform the working group of current influential policy documents relevant to contemporary nursing and priority setting scoping exercise. Three principle strategic policy documents and reports currently influencing healthcare, including nursing and midwifery in Ireland, emerged:

#### 1. Report of the Expert Review Body on Nursing and Midwifery (2022)

Developed by the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer of the Department of Health, with four chapters:

- Nursing and midwifery workforce
- Education
- Digital health
- Governance and leadership structures

#### 2. Sláintecare Implementation and Action Plan 2022

The two action plan programmes prioritised for implementation:

- Improving safe, timely access to care and promoting health and wellbeing
- · Addressing health inequalities towards universal health

#### 3. ONMSD Strategic Plan 2023 - 2025

The strategic priority areas of:

- Clinical expertise
- Quality and safety
- Service change and transformation
- Service-user engagement

Following this review, ten potential research areas emerged (Table 1).

Table 1: Potential Research Areas				
Nursing and midwifery workforce	Education	Digital health	Governance and leadership structures	Clinical expertise
Quality and safety	Service change and transformation	Service-user engagement	Improving safe, timely access to care and promoting health and wellbeing	Addressing health inequalities – towards universal health

Additionally, 23 national documents, relevant to the different disciplines within nursing and midwifery, were reviewed and mapped across the ten key strategic priority areas for rigor and inclusiveness (see Appendix 2).

## METHODOLOGY

After reviewing literature on various methodologies for conducting a research priority setting exercise, the working group decided to use a modified two-step Delphi method followed by a nominal group technique. This approach involved using consensus-building techniques to identify research priorities, with the Delphi method being used for problem-solving, idea generation, or determining priorities, and the nominal group technique being a structured form of small group discussion used to reach consensus<sup>xv</sup>. Both methods are commonly used in healthcare for setting research priorities<sup>xvi xvii xviii xix</sup>.

Figure 1 demonstrates the planning process used in phase one (two online surveys using a modified Delphi technique), and phase two (modified nominal group technique), leading to the final report stage.



Figure 1: Key planning stages in identifying research priorities

#### Phase One – Online Surveys

The purpose of the online surveys, was to ascertain the research priorities for nurses and midwives working in HSE and HSE Funded Agencies (Section 38). Nurses and midwives working within these healthcare settings were invited to take part in the online surveys.

#### Confidentiality

Participants' right to confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the scoping exercise, and complied with the HSE Personal Data Protection Policyxx.

#### Survey 1

The ten key strategic priority areas identified in the literature review served as the foundation for the development of the first survey. In the survey, participants were asked to select their top priorities for future research from these pre-determined priority areas. In addition to choosing their priorities, participants were also given the opportunity to provide additional input by identifying up to three specific research topics related to each priority area using a free-text option. This allowed participants to provide more detailed and specific input about their research priorities and allowed the working group to gather a deeper understanding of the specific research needs and interests of the participants.

The online survey was conducted using the SmartSurvey<sup>™</sup> platform, which is a survey software that allows for the creation, distribution, and analysis of surveys. The survey link and QR code were widely distributed through email and social media, and were also promoted at education events, seminars, and conferences. Directors of nursing and midwifery were contacted and asked to share the survey with nurses and midwives in their service. By promoting the survey through a variety of channels, the working group aimed to reach as many nurses and midwives working in HSE and HSE funded settings as possible and gather a diverse range of perspectives and input on research priorities.

A detailed information leaflet outlining the purpose of the scoping exercise was included with each survey. Surveys were anonymous and were distributed in August 2022. Two reminder emails and tweets were sent at two, and three weeks after the initial survey to maximise the response rate.

#### Survey 2

The purpose of the second survey was to gather more detailed and specific input from participants about their research priorities and to further refine the list of priority areas for research. Based on the data collected in the first survey, ten categories and 47 subcategories were identified. These categories and subcategories formed the basis of the second survey, in which participants were asked to rate the importance they attributed to each subcategory on a Likert scale. The scale ranged from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (extremely important). The second survey was distributed via email to all nurses and midwives who had completed the first survey. Two reminder emails were sent out at one week and two week intervals to maximize the response rate.

#### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data from survey 1 and 2 was transferred to Excel 16 for data management purposes. Content analysis was used to identify categories and subcategories from the open ended questions. Frequencies for each category were determined and the ten most frequently occurring categories along with 47 subcategories were identified. Data analysis of the quantitative data was conducted on the SmartSurvey platform and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 28).

#### Phase Two - Nominal Group Consensus Meeting

The purpose of the nominal group consensus meeting was to develop a final set of research priorities that reflected the findings from phase one (the online surveys), and that were broad enough to be relevant to all disciplines within nursing and midwifery. The nominal group was widely representative of strategic key stakeholder bodies within nursing and midwifery (see Appendix 3). The input by the group was used to further refine the research priorities identified in the online surveys.

The nominal group was convened via virtual platform. The following information was provided to the members of the group prior to the meeting:

- A brief outline of the project aim, purpose and methodology
- The role and purpose of the group
- Findings from phase one
- Details of the prioritised categories and subcategories assigned to them during the breakout room activity

Members of the nominal group were allocated to specific breakout rooms where their expertise could be best employed. The prioritised categories and subcategories from survey 2 were used as discussion points for the consultation.

### **FINDINGS**

The following section presents a summary of the findings from survey 1 and survey 2. Please note that percentages in the tables and charts have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

#### Survey 1

Of the 640 participants who engaged in the survey, 566 participants identified research priorities and a total of 2,928 topics were provided.

#### **Demographics: Areas of Practice**

Participants were asked to indicate their area of practice, a total of 10 areas were identified (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Participants by area of practice

#### **Demographics: role/grade**

Participants were asked to identify their role/grade, a total of 12 roles were represented (see Figure 3).



#### Strategic priority areas

The participants were asked to identify their research priorities from the 10 strategic priority areas in survey 1 (see Table 2). The three most common research priorities identified by the participants were: Improving safe, timely access to care, health and wellbeing 60% (n= 340); Clinical expertise 59 % (n=334); and Quality and safety 51% (n= 288). Participants listed a total of 2,928 topics for future research. The number of topics identified for each priority area ranged from 161 to 508.

Table 2	: Strategic P	riority Areas

Priority Areas	% of participants	Number of participants	Number of topics
Improving safe, timely access to care, health and wellbeing	60%	340	314
Clinical expertise	59%	334	508
Quality and safety	51%	288	377
Service change and transformation	48%	270	322
Nursing and midwifery workforce	46%	258	357
Education	42%	238	261
Service user engagement	35%	196	250
Digital health	32%	181	213
Addressing health inequalities towards universal health	30%	168	161
Governance and leadership structures	26%	146	165

#### Analysis of qualitative data in survey 1

Content analysis was used to identify categories and subcategories from the free text responses. The ten most frequently occurring categories, with 47 associated subcategories, formed the basis of survey 2 (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: Ten most frequently occurring categories in survey 1

#### Survey 2

From the 566 participants in survey 1, a total of 179 participants responded to survey 2 giving an overall response rate of 32%.

#### **Demographics: Area of Practice**

The percentage of respondents in each area of practice in survey 2 generally corresponded with the results from survey 1 (see Figure 5).



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#### **Demographics: role/grade**

The most common roles and grades in survey 2 were ADON/ADOM/ADPHN grade (19%), followed by CNM/CMM 2 grade (15%) see Figure 6.



Figure 6: Participants role/grade in survey 2

#### **Overall Average (Mean) Scores for Each Category**

The overall average score for each of the ten categories is listed in figure 7. Subcategories for each of these categories were rated on a Likert scale of (1 = not at all important to 7 = extremely important). Higher average scores indicated that more people rated the priorities as important or extremely important.

While all the mean scores are relatively high, workforce planning was identified as the top category for research eliciting the highest mean score of 6.05. Governance and leadership elicited the lowest mean score of 5.13.





The following section details the average rating for the subcategories under each of the 10 categories.

#### Workforce Planning



#### Service User Involvement



Evaluating service user experience

Involving service users in planning and provision of their care/service

The role of service users in development of services

5.65

#### Service Delivery



Figure 8: Average rating for workforce planning



Figure 9: Average rating for service user involvement



Figure 10: Average score for service delivery

#### **Education and Development**





#### **Digital Health**





5.47

5.6

Figure 11: Average score for role of nurses and midwives

5.7

5.8

5.5

Development of nurse or midwife led services in healthcare

**Role of Nurses and Midwives** 

Role of nurses and midwives in planning and providing quality patient care

Recognition of the value and contribution of nurses and midwives

Changing nursing roles with the move towards community based healthcare

The impact of role of advanced and specialist practitioners

Role of nurse and midwife in promoting health and well-being 5.2



5.3

5.4

Figure 12: Average rating for access to services

5.85

5.9

5.83

#### **Clinical Practice and Expertise/Service Change and Transformation**



Figure 13: Average score for clinical practice and expertise/ service change and transformation

### **Governance and Leadership**



Figure 16: Average score for governance and leadership



#### **Access to Services**



Figure 14: Average score for education and development

Figure 15: Average score for digital health



## **RESEARCH PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED**

Following a meeting with the nominal group who reviewed the categories and sub-categories from phase one of the scoping exercise, consensus was reached on the final research statements that will form the research priorities for nursing and midwifery 2023-2028 (see Table 3). In total there are 20 research statements under 10 research categories.

### **Workforce Planning**

- Recruitment and retention of nurses and midwives 1.
- Workload volume, skill mix and safe staffing 2.
- Health and wellbeing to support nurses and midwives in their role 3.

#### Access to Services / **Service User Involvement**

- 4. The need to enable and empower meaningful and authentic service user engagement that includes minority and vulnerable groups to inform service design, development and evaluation
- Barriers and enablers to implementing national nursing and 5. midwifery policies/ strategies and empirical evidence that support service user involvement and access to care
- 6. How the development of nursing and midwifery roles can support access to care

#### **Service Delivery**

- Looking at and learning from existing models of service delivery
- 8. Enhancing access and provision of services
- Enabling the integration of acute services with community 9. services
- 10. Barriers and enablers to effective communication between sectors

### **Role of Nurses and Midwives**

- 11. Assessing the contribution and impact of nurses and midwives in an evolving healthcare system to deliver on population health needs
- 12. Understanding the support needs and impact of advanced and specialist nursing or midwifery roles, for effective care delivery

### **Clinical Practice and Expertise**

13. Supporting the implementation and impact of high-quality person centred, evidence- based nursing or midwifery practice

### **Digital Health / Service Change and Transformation**

- 14. Identifying and understanding the purposes, benefits and risks of data and information in nursing and midwifery care delivery
- 15. Impact of digital technology on service users outcomes and clinicians (nursing and midwifery) care delivery experience
- 16. The nursing and midwifery professions adapting to a digital future

### **Education and Development**

- 17. Clinical and academic education exploration of roles /who is involved and what they do, how they interact
- 18. From CPD to PhD links to retention of nurses and midwives and patient outcomes
- 19. Education into the future: where is nursing and midwifery in interprofessional learning and simulation?

### **Governance and Leadership**

20. Roles and support structures influencing nursing and midwifery in leadership and management

## CONCLUSION

This research priority scoping exercise identified 10 research categories and 20 research statements as the research priorities for nurses and midwives working in HSE and HSE funded agencies (Section 38) for the period of 2023 to 2028. The research priorities have been identified by conducting a scoping exercise that used a combination of the modified Delphi method and the Nominal Group Technique. The process involved conducting two rounds of online surveys with nurses and midwives, followed by a consultation with a nominal group of experts to reach consensus on the final research priorities.

The research priorities identified in this scoping exercise reflect the current research needs of the nursing and midwifery professions, and are aligned with the strategic policy directions outlined in the following key documents; Sláintecare Report, the HSE Corporate & Service Plans, and the Department of Health Expert Review Body on Nursing and Midwifery.

These research priorities were identified through an online survey to reach and seek participation from a wide range of the nursing and midwifery population from the HSE and HSE Funded Agencies (Section 38). The research priorities identified in this scoping exercise reflecting the voice and opinions of all who participated, as the current research priorities of the nursing and midwifery professions. However, it is possible that these priorities may change over time, and it is important to consider the potential for new research questions and priorities to emerge as the professions evolve and as new challenges and opportunities arise.

## **APPENDIX 1**

#### **The Working Group**

Ms Lorna Peelo-Kilroe	ONMSD Lead for Project
Dr Vanessa Clarke	NMPDU, HSE North East
Ms Anne McCarthy	NMPDU, HSE West/Mid-West
Ms Anne Jesudason	NMPDU, HSE Dublin North
Ms Biny Anoop	NMPDU, HSE Dublin South, Kildare and Wicklow
Dr Mary Nolan	NMPDU Director, Midlands
Dr Anne Gallen (Advisor to the working group)	Area Director NMPDU, Dublin Mid Leinster / Chair of Nominal Group

## **APPENDIX 2**

### Contemporary national documents relevant to nursing and midwifery in Ireland

Brenner, M., Hilliard, C., Regan, G., Coughlan, B., Hayden, S., Drennan, J., Kelleher, D. (2014) Research Priorities for Children's Nursing in Ireland: a Delphi study. Journal of Paediatric Nursing. July- August 29 (4) 301-308.

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HRB (2021) Strategy 2021-2025 Health Research - making an impact.

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## **APPENDIX 3**

Membership of the Nursing and Midwifery Research Priority Setting **Representation Expert Nominal Group** 

DISCIPLINE/AREA REPRESENTATION	MEMBER
Nominal Group Chair	Dr Anne Gallen, (Area Director, NMPDU DML)
Director of Nursing	Dr Karn Cliffe (then Interim Group DoN, DMHG)
Mental Health Nursing	Mr David Timmons, Area Director
Public Health Nursing	Ms Maeve Smyth, DPHN
Director of Intellectual Disability Nursing	Ms Gillian Roddy, DoN, Louth/Meath Disability Ser
Director of Children's Nursing	Dr Carol Hilliard
Midwifery Services Director	Ms Lucille Sheehy, ADOM, Clinical PD Coordinato
Director of Nursing, Older Persons Services	Unable to attend on the day
NMPDU Director	Ms Judy Ryan
CNME Directors	Ms Shauna Ennis (Voluntary)
	Ms Roisin McLoughlin
ONMSD National Leads	Ms Margaret Quigley
	Ms Deirdre Lang
	Ms Loretto Grogan
	Dr Deirdre Mulligan
National Clinical Leadership Centre	Dr Aoife Lane
Higher Education Institutes	Dr Peter Carr
NMBI Representative	Ms Carolyn Donohoe
Department of Health CNO	Dr Karen Greene and Grainne Sheeran
HSE Research and Development	Dr Olga Cleary, Senior Research Manager
INMO	Ms Steve Pitman, Head of Education
SIPTU	Ms Bernie Heneghan
Psychiatric Nurses' Association	Ms Aisling Culhane, Research & Development Adv
Technological Universities of Ireland	Representative unable to attend on the day
Members of project working group,	Ms Lorna Peelo-Kilroe
ONMSD	Dr Mary Nolan
	Ms Anne Jesudason
	Ms Anne McCarthy
	Ms Biny Anoop
	Dr Vanessa Clarke

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Oifig an Stiúrthóra Seirbhísí Altranais & Cnáimhseachais

Office of the Nursing & Midwifery Services Director